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Cathy Jain – ‘Artificial’ EP review: vibrant, beautiful storytelling from a rising star

By **Ella Kemp** 3rd November 2021

Credit: Mae Sass

To simply call Cathy Jain a bedroom pop artist would do a disservice to the 17-year-old’s constantly shapeshifting talent. Her debut EP ‘Artificial’, a slick collection of alt-pop tracks about teenage authenticity, might have been produced between her bedroom in Cheshire and that of her India-based producer Heron, but there’s cinematic, ethereal textures here – alongside the familiar lo-fi trappings of emerging young artists – that propel Jain’s first extended release to major heights immediately.

Jain is preoccupied with the lines between authenticity and appearance in her lyrics. She’s rarely not thinking about what it means to be perceived, or what it means to be honest around the people you love – or those you desperately wish would love you – while still figuring out your own identity as you come of age.

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But while there may be this uncertainty in her lyrics, Jain’s production proves she’s already supremely confident as a musician. Psychedelia sits alongside unpretentious beats and epic, shimmering textures in a blissed-out time capsule of restless youth. Hints of Billie Eilish, Lana Del Rey and even Frank Ocean all shine through, the resulting music somehow finding fresh, original ground to tread on.

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There's a deceptive simplicity to the EP's title track, a breezy acoustic ballad concerned with what's real that earns a sense of complexity once Jain's warm vocals come into focus. 'Green Screen' layers kaleidoscopic harmonies with rich guitar-led melodies, giving anxieties that are often dismissed as immature the serious platform they deserve. 'I See Us In Heaven' switches gears again, with glitchy vocals and R&B shades framing *"a pretty face with a dark soul"* in a seductive, laid-back package about a dream date without an ounce of nervousness in sight.

Across the EP discordant keys reveal a haunting, compelling backbone that twists plain (yet convincing) lyrics about trying to impress someone into something almost hypnotic. *"Lying while I'm lying next to you,"* Jain sings on the forthright 'Cool Kid', embracing the dualities of finding your feet at the age where everything is embarrassing.

'Artificial' is an astute, effective release from an Extremely Online kid deftly tuned into the nervousness of the internet age. Cathy Jain might be worried about seeming fake, but there's no cause for concern here – it's obvious this impressive truth-telling soundscape is only scratching the surface of her talent.

Details

- **Release date:** November 5
- **Record label:** Yala! Records